

# LOK VIRSA

CULTURAL VOYAGE

## LOK VIRSA

❖ CULTURAL VOYAGE ❖

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*



COMPILED BY MAKHDOOM AHMAD CHISHTI

S U P P O R T E D B Y  
 Birmingham City Council



Supported by  
 The National Lottery®  
through the Heritage Lottery Fund

 Heritage  
Lottery Fund

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## CULTURAL VOYAGE

**L**ok Virsa, meaning ‘cultural voyage’ is the culmination of a project, which has focused on the heritage of Muslim communities in the West Midlands. This project has raised an awareness and understanding of the cultural heritage and legacy of diverse Muslim communities living in the area. As a result of the movement of peoples across national boundaries, it is important for Muslim and other communities to understand and respect cultural difference.

The Lok Virsa project has worked with a number of Muslim communities in the West Midlands by holding heritage training workshops and collecting primary source materials such as photographs, artefacts and stories, which have been used in this publication, a website and CD ROM. The book also includes the stories of individuals including role models who have contributed to the cultural heritage of the West Midlands.

Lok Virsa has tried to transform the image of the diverse Muslim communities within wider communities and to highlight the positive input and contribution of Muslims to life in Britain. Every community’s past is central to its future. Its heritage includes its historical roots and origins, the arts, sports, music, festivals, motifs and much more.

Lok Virsa has played a role in celebrating multiculturalism by strengthening links and developing a network between people. The culmination of the project is the Lok Virsa book which encompasses the information and illustrations obtained during the project from the diverse Muslim communities now established in the West Midlands.

*Makhdoom Ahmad Chishti*



➊ *A Jat girl wearing pashmina shawl.*



➋ *Silver embossed pot usually used for holding drinks.*

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

This section provides an insight into the history and contemporary circumstances of different communities in Birmingham and the West Midlands which have originated in countries overseas with a substantial Muslim religious background. The pieces are written by several individuals, both Muslim and non-Muslim. They provide general surveys, statistical information, overviews of different communities, studies of organisations and individual biographies or autobiographies presenting different perspectives and

experiences. The West Midlands has been home to men and women from Muslim communities who have contributed to local life as community activists, religious leaders, politicians, academics, lawyers, artists, engineers and workers of many different kinds. One theme that emerges is the importance of networks through families, communities and institutions, in maintaining identity and providing support.

*Malcolm Dick*



📍 *A busy street in Alum Rock.*



📍 *Central Jamia Mosque, Birmingham.*



📍 *Ladypool Road, Balsall Heath, Birmingham.*



📍 *Victoria Square, Birmingham City Centre.*

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## CELEBRATIONS & CULTURES



④ A Muslim worshipper with his son.



④ Turban usually called a Kullab.



④ Traditional fabrics.



④ Muslim worshippers offering the Eid prayer.



④ A 'Doli' used by a bride to travel to the groom's house.

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## WINDOWS ON ISLAM

This section of the publication defines the basic practices of Islam and what is expected of a true Muslim. The chapters in this section look initially at the five pillars of Islam:

- ▶ Faith (Shahadah)
- ▶ Prayer (Salat)
- ▶ Fasting in Ramadan (Siyam)
- ▶ Almsgiving (Zakah)
- ▶ Pilgrimage to Makkah (Hajj)

These duties are illustrated by looking at how five individuals in the West Midlands have interpreted them in their personal lives. Three of the five statements are taken from the transcripts of oral histories conducted by the Millennium Project in 2000 and 2001. This was a multi-media community history project in Birmingham which created a range of materials to illustrate patterns of life and living in the city after 1945.

*Verdab Chishti*



④ *Islamic calligraphy.*



④ *Muslim girl reciting the Qur'an.*



④ *Children are taught the Qur'an and prayer.*

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## ART & ARTEFACTS



➤ Brass plate with the 99 names of Muhammad ﷺ (PBUH).



➤ Brass plate with the 99 names of Allah (SWT).



➤ A traditionally crafted wooden mirror.



➤ A clock designed by a local artist as a map of Pakistan.



➤ Islamic calligraphy engraved on copper.



➤ Colourful bangles on a wooden stand.

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

Articles written by Muslim and non-Muslim individuals, provide a snapshot of Muslim cultural influences. This section will give the reader a flavour of the richness of the Muslim cultural contribution to our society.

Culture is an essential part of everyone's life where people engage in experiences which derive from their countries of origin. Muslim culture has been influenced by geography and Islamic philosophy, particularly the Sufi

tradition of Islamic mysticism, where links have been made between poetry and other cultural activities.

After an introduction to Sufism, there are several articles on music. We move onto sport such as Cricket, Gulli Danda and Kabaddi followed by traditional crafts such as rug making. An architectural study looks at the minaret as a symbol of sacredness in Islam.

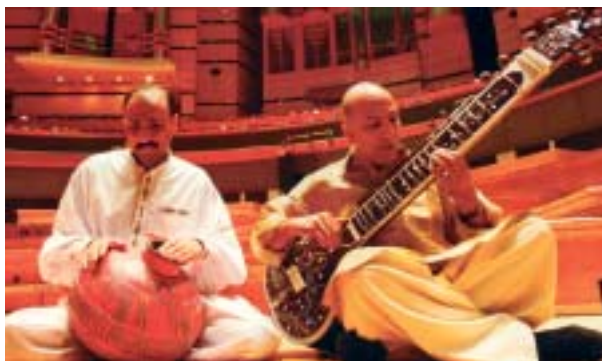
*Alison Gove-Humphries*



④ *Decorative hand made Qindeels.*



④ *Mr Zarcian and daughter at the Oriental Rug Centre.*



④ *Hassan Shah and Rauf Shah with a Ghara and a Sitar.*



④ *Teams playing Gulli Danda.*

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*

# LOK VIRSA

## SUFI OBJECTIVES

This project has developed from the work of the Social Unity Foundation of Innovation (SUFI) Trust. This is a charitable trust that has the following aims:

- ▶ To disseminate information about the variety of achievements in education, employment, sport, arts, the local community and other fields of influence.
- ▶ To associate the wider community, the statutory and non-statutory organisations, voluntary groups and individuals in a common effort to advance education and social welfare with the object of improving conditions of life for the community.
- ▶ To raise funds for future objectives of the organisation's programmes.
- ▶ To encourage all sectors of the Black and ethnic communities to participate in celebrating their own achievements.
- ▶ To develop links with schools, youth groups, and other community organisations in all matters relating to the promotion of cross-cultural working and pride.
- ▶ To develop a programme which will contribute towards the formation of networks and partnerships, support integration, provide opportunities to develop projects, access information, enable self-development and create discussion groups to encourage individuals to get involved in issues of relevance to communities living and working in a global society.

*Aasma Nazir*



➤ *Handing over the ambulance keys ceremony (these ambulances were donated by the West Midlands St. John Ambulance for use in Pakistan): Lord Mayor Councillor Mike Nangle (patron: SUFI Trust), Anwer Al-Nisa (patron: Baha Jee Social and Welfare Association, Khanewal, Pakistan) and Susan Taylor (County commander, St. John Ambulance, West Midlands County) [Courtesy: Evening Mail, August 28, 2004].*

*Exploring the Muslim Heritage*